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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BAKU 000833

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DEPARTMENT FOR G/TIP: MEGAN HALL

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [KDEM](#) [AJ](#)
SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR DISCUSSES TIP, MEDIA CRACKDOWN, AND
POLICE ADVISOR WITH MINISTER OF INTERNAL AFFAIRS RAMIL
USUBOV

Classified By: AMBASSADOR ANNE E. DERSE PER 1.4 (B,D).

11. (C) SUMMARY: In a June 22 meeting with Minister of Internal Affairs Ramil Usubov, the Ambassador delivered the 2007 Trafficking in Persons Report, highlighting areas identified in the report as needing greater GOAJ action. The Minister was receptive to most suggestions, and agreed to continue working with the U.S. and the international community to increase Azerbaijan's anti-TIP efforts. The Ambassador raised U.S. concerns with the deteriorating media freedom situation, noting that the Ministry could improve the situation by vigorously investigating cases of violence against journalists. She listed five high-profile cases in particular, including the unsolved 2005 murder of opposition journalist Elmar Huseynov; the Minister responded that he did not understand why we only raised unsolved cases, not those that the MIA had solved. Regarding the U.S. proposal to place a police advisor within the MIA, Usubov said that he welcomed a police advisor of the USG's choosing, but would not allow this individual to work within the MIA, noting that he had given the same response after receiving similar proposals from Russia, Kazakhstan, and Ukraine. END SUMMARY

THE GOAJ'S ANTI-TIP EFFORTS

12. (C) On June 22, the Ambassador met with Minister of Internal Affairs Ramil Usubov to deliver the 2007 Trafficking in Persons Report, and to discuss a range of other issues. The Minister opened the meeting by noting that the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA) has stepped up its efforts to fight organized crime, drug trafficking, and trafficking in persons since his last meeting with the Ambassador in January. He noted that he appreciated the Embassy's cooperation in conducting trainings on terrorism response and mine-sweeping. Usubov said that he had reviewed the TIP Report, and that he had hoped for a higher tier ranking; regardless, he said the MIA wanted to increase its efforts to combat TIP. According to the Minister, the MIA wants to increase the number of investigations, prosecutions, and convictions of traffickers, but he said that the courts remain biased. Usubov said that many traffickers receive light sentences, largely due to the fact that most convicted traffickers are women with small children. (NOTE: Azerbaijani law provides for lighter sentencing for pregnant women and women with small children; this applies to all crimes.)

13. (C) Usubov said that the MIA has finished renovating the location designated to house the pending nationwide toll-free victims' assistance hotline, and that several phone lines had already been connected. However, the sewage system beneath the newly-constructed building is not ready, although the Minister said he had discussed this with the Baku Mayor, who promised that the system would be ready within two to three

months. The Ambassador noted that after several years of solidly increasing its anti-TIP efforts, the GOAJ had reached a plateau last year. She outlined U.S. concerns, particularly the need to get the hotline up and running, to establish a nationwide victims' referral mechanism, and pressed upon Usubov the need for the GOAJ to increase its TIP-prevention efforts.

¶4. (C) Noting that the Tier 2 ranking was "not bad," the Minister conceded that the GOAJ could increase its efforts to combat TIP. He outlined the progress the GOAJ has made since developing its TIP National Action Plan in 2004, pointing out that arrests, prosecutions, and convictions have increased exponentially. Usubov said that a national referral mechanism already exists; that representatives of nine ministries meet regularly to coordinate anti-TIP efforts. Further, he said that the media now devotes more attention to TIP, and that victims can learn about TIP from television and recognize their situation. (NOTE: It is clear that Usubov does not understand what we mean by a national referral mechanism; we will follow up at the working level.) The Minister also mentioned that while the victims' assistance hotline is not yet functional, the MIA has other hotlines that can be used to report TIP crimes.

POLICE ADVISOR

¶5. (C) Referring to a Presidential decree on police reform, the Ambassador asked the Minister about the USG's outstanding proposal to place a police advisor within the Ministry. After clarifying a misunderstanding - Usubov had mistakenly thought he would be required to request this position - he said he would be happy to cooperate with a USG-funded police

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advisor. However, the Minister said, it would not be possible for this individual to work within the MIA. Too many other countries want to do this, Usubov said, listing Russia, Kazakhstan, and Ukraine as examples of countries from which he had received similar proposals. Noting that Russia extradites to Azerbaijan approximately 350 individuals per year, the Minister asked why he would let the U.S. place an advisor within the MIA when he would not allow Russia to do so. He also said that Azerbaijan has placed such advisors in other countries, but that these individuals work out of the Azerbaijani Embassies, not within other governments' ministries.

INVESTIGATING VIOLENCE AGAINST JOURNALISTS

¶6. (C) The Ambassador turned to the ongoing bilateral human rights and democracy dialogue, noting serious U.S. concerns over the deteriorating media freedom situation. She highlighted the Ministry's responsibility to rigorously investigate cases of physical violence against journalists. The Ambassador listed five unsolved cases of particular interest to the U.S.: Elmar Huseynov, the Monitor magazine Editor-In-Chief who was murdered on March 2, 2005; Uzeyir Jafarov, the Gundelik Azerbaijan Editor who was beaten on April 20; Fikret Huseynli, the Azadliq newspaper reporter who was abducted and beaten on March 6, 2006; Bahaddin Haziyevev, the Bizim Yol newspaper Editor-In-Chief who was abducted, beaten, and had his legs run over by the assailants' car on May 18, 2006; and Nijat Huseynov, the Azadliq newspaper reporter who was beaten and stabbed on December 25, 2006.

¶7. (C) The Minister said that democracy and human rights are a priority for the GOAJ. Without specifying to which cases he was referring, Usubov asked why the Ambassador did not inquire about cases that the MIA had solved. Besides, he continued, is there any country that has solved all of its criminal cases? The Minister said that while it is not in the GOAJ's interest for journalists to be beaten, they do not behave professionally or ethically. According to Usubov,

many of the injured journalists had been beaten during protests; he said they should wear clear press identification so that this will not happen. (NOTE: Journalists already wear blue vests to indicate their affiliation, but many have been injured while wearing these vests.)

COMMENT

18. (C) Although Usubov does not fully understand some of the technical aspects of combating trafficking in persons, he seems to have the right attitude in addressing the problems. Further, working level MIA TIP personnel are very engaged, and have already begun following up on some of the concerns the Ambassador raised. We will continue to press the MIA for additional progress on points raised by the Department in this year's TIP review. Usubov's comments on the media situation are not surprising, as he is the government official who has filed the most criminal defamation lawsuits against journalists. In stating that journalists should be clearly identified so that they are not inadvertently beaten at protests, he is missing the point that police should not behave violently when dispersing a crowd, and the point that several journalists in Azerbaijan have been violently attacked not while attending demonstrations, but rather targeted in front of their homes or offices. We note that in a letter to the Ambassador in March, Usubov identified crowd control (along with combating human trafficking, illegal migration, and high-technology crimes; modernizing methods of combating drug trafficking; and improving forensic investigations) as areas in which he seeks additional USG training. We will use this opening to intensify efforts on police reform; we will continue to engage Usubov and other GOAJ officials broadly on the need for democratic reform, including respect for human rights and greater media freedom. DERSE